

Statement Mary Fetchet
Voices of September 11th, Founding Director
May 17, 2005
Cargo Screening and Launch Passenger Notification Program On Unscreened
Cargo Press Conference

I would like to speak to you today about the threat unscreened cargo shipments pose to our air transportation network, and to lend my support to the efforts taken by Congressman Shays, Markey, and Maloney to close the cargo security loophole in the Department of Homeland Security's authorization bill. During the presidential debates last year, both candidates agreed that a nuclear attack perpetrated by terrorists was the single greatest threat to American security in the near future. However, because of dangerous lapses in the screening of cargo on flights, terrorists are still afforded easy access to the homeland, and could deliver such a weapon, potentially no larger than a suitcase, with devastating effect using an airplane. The events of September 11 showed America that terrorists are willing and able to exploit our vulnerable transportation networks and turn them against us. In the past too many containers have come into our country without being inspected properly—we are extremely fortunate that such a weapon has not yet struck America. The Department of Homeland Security must shake off its complacency in aircraft security and provide the money and personnel to effectively screen cargo on all flights into and inside the US.

On September 11, America suffered the loss of 3,000 in an attack caused not only by the cunning preparations of Al-Qaeda terrorists, but by the blunders of those who

underestimated our enemies' resolve and overestimated the security of our airlines. Tragically, the same situation exists today. The Department of Homeland Security has created the façade of airline protection with more rigorous passenger inspection and baggage screening without actually making the airways safer. More stringent passenger controls are ineffective without comprehensive cargo inspections. By double locking the front door and leaving the back wide open, the DHS has neglected its responsibility to provide the highest standard of security available to the American people.

The only obstacles to implementation of a full cargo screening regime at our airports are shortsightedness and penny-pinching on the part of airlines and the DHS. The technology to screen cargo not only exists but, according to a Boeing representative who testified before the 9/11 commission, is ready to be implemented today—in fact, it was ready years ago.

Our government officials know what our vulnerabilities are, and so do our enemies. By shirking their responsibility to do everything in their power to keep Americans safe domestically, these officials are risking another 9/11. We know from Israel and other countries that technology exists that is capable of screening cargo on American airplanes. The DHS must devote sufficient resources to make it happen. Americans must be protected against potential acts of terrorism, and if they're not they should be aware of the risks involved in traveling on an airliner with unscreened cargo. Making security decisions based on a cost analysis

or allowing lobbyists to undermine national security is unacceptable – we can no longer afford to gamble with American lives.